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NOTES AND ABSTRACTS

ANTHROPOLOGY—PSYCHOLOGY—LEGAL-MEDICINE.

Obligation of the Schools for the Training of Feeble-Minded Children.

—[The following is abstracted from the latest report of the Superintendent of schools to the Board of Education of St. Louis. It is a portion of Dr. J. E. W. Wallin's report to the Board on the aims and operation of the Psycho-Educational Clinic.—ED.]

While we may say that the prevention and the elimination of the feeble-minded are the fundamental obligation of society with respect to this class of social incompetents, it is recognized that society cannot, from the standpoint of its own well-being, evade the necessity of caring for, supervising and protecting the feeble-minded already born into the state. The question as to whether or not feeble-minded children should be educated, in addition to being cared for, may be said to have been settled in the early part of the last century when it was demonstrated by Itard, Seguin, Guggenbuehl, Saegert and their followers that the feeble-minded could be improved and rendered more or less self-supporting and law-abiding by systematic training. The obligation of providing a practical type of training for feeble-minded children, so that they can be made to contribute their little mite to the world's work, has now been assumed by all of the leading civilized nations of the earth. The only question now at issue is whether this work should be assumed by residential schools under state, county or municipal control or by public school day classes. Practically this question has largely solved itself, for since society has agreed that these children must be educated, there is no option but to train them in the public day classes, because the provision afforded by the residential institutions are entirely inadequate, and are likely to remain so for some time to come. Moreover, it is more economical to train these pupils in the public day classes than in the residential schools where they would have to be housed and fed at public expense. It is recognized, however, that some defectives ought to be trained in institutions, either because they are so low grade that they cannot betake themselves to the day classes, or because they are not properly environed at home, while others should be permanently colonized at the pubertal period for remunerative service, because they cannot be guaranteed adequate protective oversight in the home and threaten to become a social menace.

It is now generally recognized, however, that feeble-minded pupils should not be educated in the regular grades of the public schools but in separate schools or classes, both because they injuriously affect, and seriously obstruct the progress of, the normal pupils, and because they receive little benefit from the instruction afforded in the regular grades. In consequence of this fact, the following recommendations are offered:

Special Schools. 1. It is recommended that the special classes or special schools, as here defined, should be designed exclusively for feeble-minded pupils. By a feeble-minded child is meant one who suffers from a serious and permanent condition of arrested brain development dating from birth or from early life, by reason of which even the highest grades of children thus affected are rarely able to do school work beyond the third grade